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Notes on new and scarce birds in the Falkland Islands 1988–1990

by Phil Gregory

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The status and history of birds in the Falkland Islands have been well documented by Woods (1988), but records after publication of that book require summary. This paper lists my own observations and those of both local residents and visitors, which I collected from November 1988 to December 1990 whilst resident in the islands. My wildlife column in the *Penguin News*, the local newspaper, was a useful contact point for the collection of sightings that might otherwise have gone undocumented, and the introduction of a telephone system throughout the islands in 1989 was also invaluable for these purposes. Many local people take an interest in birds and anything strange is soon noted.

This paper notes the first occurrence in the Falkland Islands of Snares Island Penguin *Eudyptes robustus*, Royal Penguin *Eudyptes (chrysolophus) schlegeli*, Georgian Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus*, Long-winged Harrier *Circus buffoni*, Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* and Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*. A number of other vagrants are detailed.

Potential colonists are also noted, with breeding season records of Great Grebe *Podiceps major*, Red Shoveler *Anas platalea*, White-winged Coot *Fulica leucoptera* and Rufous-collared Sparrow *Junco capensis*. The latter species seems to be occurring much more often in the west, and is a likely colonist. Over-wintering of Red Shoveler and Buff-necked Ibis *Theristicus caudatus* is documented, and the first breeding records of Barn Owl *Tyto alba* are given.

The observations are my own unless credited to other observers, chief of whom are Dr Bill Bourne (WRPB), Alan Henry (AH), Michael Morrison (MM), Dave Osborn (DO), and Commander Mike Winter (MW). The following codes give an indication of status at the Falkland Islands; V, vagrant; PM, passage migrant. Other status is as noted.

Systematic list

CHIN-STRAP PENGUIN *Pygoscelis antarctica*

V

An annual vagrant in recent years. One at Penguin Walk in Dec 88. One on Saunders Island 23 Nov 1989 amongst a Gentoo Penguin *P. papua* colony (DO). A single moulting bird was at the tip of Cape Pembroke 14 Apr 1990.

ROYAL PENGUIN *Eudyptes (chrysolophus) schlegeli*

V

Ian Strange (pers. comm.) reports several birds in a Rockhopper Penguin *E. chrysocome* colony on West Falkland, an astonishing range extension from Macquarie Island. Dates and details could not be obtained but the record is now published in Strange (1992).

SNARES CRESTED PENGUIN *E. robustus*

V

Ian Strange showed me a photograph of an erect-crested penguin species in a Rockhopper colony on West Falkland, which he identified as being a Snares Crested Penguin, an amazing vagrant from New Zealand. The bird was at the Settlement rookery on New Island on 10 Dec 1988, for a single day only; seen and photographed by T. Lomey (1990).

It is worth speculating whether odd individuals of antipodean penguins wander more widely than is realized, given previous Falkland records of two such species: Fiordland Crested Penguin *E. pachyrhynchus*, considered doubtful by Woods with provenance and exact 19th century date uncertain, and Erect-crested Penguin *E. sclateri* on West Point Island in 1961–66, paired with a Rockhopper and twice attempting nesting.

GREAT GREBE *Podiceps major*

Annual vagrant

One in non-breeding dress, Pebble Island 4 Dec 1988 (J. Reid). One in partial breeding dress, Beaver Pond, Pebble Island 18–19 Dec 1988. Two birds off Port Howard for much of Feb–Mar 1988 (local observers).

ROYAL ALBATROSS *Diomedea epomophora*

PM

10 on 3 Feb 1989 in Berkeley/Falkland Sounds. 2 adults of the race *epomophora* off Saunders Is. 5 Feb 1989.

GREY-HEADED ALBATROSS *Diomedea chrysostoma*

PM

An adult off Kidney Is. 27 Nov 1988, and an adult in Berkeley Sound 25 Jan 1989.

LIGHT-MANTLED SOOTY ALBATROSS *Phoebastria palpebrata*

V

An adult flew E past Hookers Point during a gale on 15 Dec 1990 (AH).

NORTHERN GIANT PETREL *Macronectes halli*

Status uncertain

Despite careful looking, I was able to make no definite identifications of this species, which has bred on Beauchene Island. The numerous

birds at Stanley butchery outfall were always Southern Giant Petrels *M. giganteus*. I had several strong probables of *M. halli*, e.g. on Carcass Is. 9 Sept 1989 and 8 Sept 1990, and also some birds of intermediate form off Christina Bay on 15 Sept 1990. These had narrow white leading edges to the wing, pale bodies and horn-coloured bills with dark tips. Nesting colonies of Giant Petrels on Sea-lion and Pebble Islands were all *M. giganteus*. The Northern Giant Petrel is clearly very scarce in the islands and should be identified with great care.

ANTARCTIC PETREL *Thalassoica antarctica*

V

A single bird killed by a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* between Brookfield and Port Louis on 15 Sept 1990. Michael Morrison brought me the corpse, which had no black trailing edge to the secondaries, and only a narrow dark tip to the single remaining tail feather. Presumably the bird's feathers were heavily abraded. The bill was dark grey and the legs and feet dirty pink. The fifth record for the islands.

SOFT-PLUMAGED PETREL *Pterodroma mollis*

Probably annual PM

5+ off Cape Pembroke on 1 Apr 1990. Observations at sea by MW and WRPB were of 50 within the 200 mile limit on 5 Feb 1990, and 17 110–150 km ESE of Cape Pembroke on 24 Feb 1990. Likely to be an annual visitor as suggested by Woods.

GREAT-WINGED PETREL *Pterodroma macroptera*

V

One between 110 and 150 km ESE of Cape Pembroke on 5 Feb 1990 (MW, WRPB). The third record.

ANTARCTIC PRION *Pachyptila desolata*

Uncertain, perhaps regular

Hundreds during the morning of 4 Feb 1990 en route from Punta Arenas to Stanley and nearing the edge of the 200 mile limit. Around mid-day this species was replaced by the Thin-billed Prion.

THIN-BILLED PRION *P. belcheri*

Breeder on West Falkland

Thousands during the afternoon of 4 Feb 1990 as we entered Falkland waters en route from Punta Arenas to Stanley, replacing the flocks of Antarctic Prion seen earlier. One bird had a marked buffish tip to the tail, similar to Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea* pattern but lacking distinctive head markings and otherwise being typical of *P. belcheri*. A second bird had a narrow pale tip to the tail.

GREY PETREL *Procellaria cinerea*

V

One 110–150 km ESE of Cape Pembroke on 24 Feb 1990 (MW, WRPB).

GREAT SHEARWATER *Puffinus gravis*

Scarce breeder

13 off Kidney Is. 28 Dec 1988; c. 20 in Berkeley Sound 21 Jan 1989; 2 off Cape Pembroke 8 Dec 1989; 2 off E. Falkland 30 Dec 1989; and 1 there 5 Feb 1990. 40 110–150 km ESE of Cape Pembroke 24 Feb 1990 (MW, WRPB). 1 off Cape Pembroke 10 Mar 1990; 15 off Christina Bay 22 Apr 1990; 1 off Cape Pembroke 28 Apr 1990.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

V

A single bird within Falkland waters on 5 Feb 1990 (MW, WRPB). The third record to date.

LITTLE SHEARWATER *Puffinus assimilis*

V

One on 24 Feb 1990 110–150 km ESE of Cape Pembroke, and another on 3 Mar 1990 185 km ESE of Cape Pembroke (MW, WRPB). The second and third records.

WHITE-BELLIED STORM PETREL *Fregetta grallaria*

V

One on 24 Feb 1990 110–150 km ESE of Cape Pembroke (MW, WRPB) was the third sighting within territorial waters (cf. Woods 1988).

GREY-BACKED STORM-PETREL *Garrodia nereis*

Scarce breeder

Only two records of this uncommon species: one in Falkland Sound 3 Feb 1989, and one at sea off West Falkland 4 Feb 1990. In addition, remains of single birds were found on Kidney Is. during the breeding seasons of both 1989 and 1990, suggesting that nesting still occurs there despite a lack of live sightings.

GEORGIAN DIVING-PETREL *Pelecanoides georgicus*

V, perhaps overlooked

A dead bird picked up at Stanley swimming pool on 31 Mar 1990 had been present since 26 Mar (Willie Harvey); specimen sent to BAS. The first record for the islands, but it could easily be overlooked as field identification is impossible. A small wreck of seabirds occurred around this time, with 2 Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* and a Common Diving-petrel *P. urinatrix* being picked up in the same vicinity. They may have been attracted by the lights of the newly completed swimming pool.

MAGELLAN DIVING-PETREL *P. magellani*

V

A single bird of what appeared to be this species came aboard the M.V. *Stena Seaspread* in Falkland Sound during foggy weather in mid-June 1990. Commander Mike Winter caught and photographed the bird, which showed the broad white half-collar typical of *P. magellani*. The species is only known from two records of birds in 1888 and 1930, and a couple of sight records in 1984. It perhaps occurs much more often than is realised. WRPB (*in litt*) informs me that the 1888 specimen is actually a misidentified Common Diving-petrel, making MW's bird the fourth for the Falklands.

COCOI HERON *Ardea cocoi*

V

One at Dupree Harbour late May 1989, and perhaps the same bird at Monty Dean's Creek on 9 Sept 1989 (MM); 1 at Cow Bay 5 Oct 1989 (J. and G. Smith); 1 at Albemarle Creek, West Falkland, 29 Oct 1989 (G. Whatley); 1 at Estancia 6 May 1990 (A. Heathman) and maybe the same bird at Moody Brook 14 May 1990 (G. Cheek). Birds can clearly survive for long periods at favourable sites. All these records could refer to a single individual.

SNOWY EGRET *Egretta thula*

V

One at Bertha's Pond 21 May 1989 (D. Munns) was the 4th record for the Falklands.

CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

PM, first recorded 1976

No records in 1989, but a small influx in 1990, with records of up to 7 birds at various localities between 23 Mar and 6 May.

BUFF-NECKED IBIS *Theristicus caudatus*

Annual vagrant

A long-staying individual on Cape Pembroke from June to 25 Dec 1989 at least (Father J. Doran and many observers). 1 at Fitzroy 16 Sept 1990, 1 at Shallow Harbour mid-Oct 1990 (M. Marsh), 1 at Port Edgar 21 Oct 1990 (M. and A. Alazia), 2 on Pebble Is. Oct 1990 (J. Reid).

ROSEATE SPOONBILL *Ajaja ajaja*

V

A single bird at Monty Dean's Bridge 29 May–1 Jun 1989, and a dead bird found in late August about a mile from the bridge, presumably the same individual (MM). The fifth record; two of the previous birds have also been found dead.

CHILEAN FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus chilensis*

V

One at Fox Point in Feb 1989 (Mrs Brindall) was the 4th record for the islands.

COSCOROBA SWAN *Coscoroba coscoroba*

V

No records in the period 1988–90, contra the statement in Strange (1992): "probably resident, breeding not yet confirmed".

FERAL GOOSE *Anser anser*

Introduced resident, increasing

Odd birds were seen around Stanley in the period; also 15 on Sea Lion Is. 17 Jan 1989, 15 on Carcass Is. 9 Sept 1989 and 20 there 9 Sept 1990, with a clutch of 6 eggs in one nest. White-plumaged individuals are frequent and are sometimes reported as Coscoroba Swans. This feral species is not listed in Strange (1992).

ASHY-HEADED GOOSE *Chloephaga poliocephala*

Annual vagrant

One at Port Louis 15 Sept 1990 (MM); one at Penguin Walk 11–13 Oct 1990 (AH), and one on Sea Lion Is. in early Oct 1990.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Failed introduction

No records of feral stock in the period. Domestic ducks in Stanley resemble Mallard.

CINNAMON TEAL *Anas cyanoptera*

Annual vagrant in recent years

Three pairs on Pebble Island in Dec 1988 (J. Reid); 1 male Carcass Is. 9 Sept 1989; 1 female Surf Bay pond 15–16 Oct 1989; 1 male Cape Pembroke 21–26 Nov 1989 (DO); 1 female airstrip ponds 25 Dec 1989 (DO); 2 females Carcass Is. 9 Sept 1990 (very wild, almost certainly newly arrived); 1 male Betts Pond, Pebble Is. 23 Dec 1990 and the male

plus a pair there 27 Dec 1990. The presence of pairs in the breeding season is noteworthy.

RED SHOVELER *Anas platalea*

Annual vagrant in recent years

One female Pebble Is. Dec 1988 (J. Reid); 1 male Sea Lion Is. 14 Nov 1989 (DO); 1 pair Stanley airstrip ponds 15–19 Dec 1989 (G. Bound), and a female there 25 Dec 1989 (DO); 4 males and 1 female Bertha's Beach track Pond 31 Mar 1990, and over-wintered (MW); 1 female Long Pond, Pebble Is. 26 Dec 1990. The occurrence of over-wintering birds and pairs suggests the possibility of breeding.

LONG-WINGED HARRIER *Circus buffoni*

V

A single dark-morph bird near Stanley on 25 Feb 1989 was the first for the Falklands. Confusion with the dark phase of Red-backed Hawk *Buteo polyosoma* is possible on a poor view, but the bird was seen at close range for some minutes.

AMERICAN KESTREL *Falco sparverius*

V

A female at Port Louis 25 Feb–6 Apr 1989 (MM), which returned on 17 May and remained until 30 Aug; also a female seen at Brookfield and Long Is. during this time, perhaps the same individual. An immature male at Moody Brook 14–27 May 1989. Successful overwintering of vagrant birds, as suggested by Woods, is proven by the Port Louis individual.

CHIMANGO CARACARA *Milvago chimango*

V

One on Cape Pembroke in autumn 1988 (AH) is the third or fourth record.

WHITE-WINGED COOT *Fulica leucoptera*

V

One present on Betts Pond, Pebble Is. on 18 Dec 1988, and another on Beaver Pond the same day.

SOUTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus chilensis*

Annual vagrant

One at Brookfield 1 Aug to Nov 1989; a second bird arrived 9 Sept 1989 but did not stay (M. Morrison). Single birds Stanley Common 13 Aug 1989 (AH), Beaver Is. 20 Nov 1990 (D. Poncet), and Sea Lion Is. 24 Nov 1990 (P. Watts).

TAWNY-THROATED DOTTEREL *Eudromias ruficollis*

V

One on Stanley Common 15 Sep 1989 (S. Gregory) was the third for the islands.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

PM, a few overwintering

Twelve on Wreck Point, Pebble Is., 19 Dec 1988 had over-wintered (J. Reid); also 2 on Carcass Is. Sep 1989 (R. McGill), 1 on Cape Pembroke 16 Oct 1989, and 1 on Sand Point, Pebble Is., 25 Dec 1990.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa melanoleuca*

V

One at the Frying Pan near Mt. Pleasant from 11 Nov to at least 5 Dec 1989. The first for the Falklands.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

PM

81 on Bertha's Beach 14 Nov 1989 (DO), the maximum recorded for the islands.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *Calidris bairdii*

V, probably annual

May be much overlooked amongst the flocks of White-rumped Sandpipers *C. fuscicollis*. The following were recorded, all 1989: 2 ad Surf Bay 23 Jan; 1 juv Surf Bay 2 Feb; 4 (2 ad, 2 juv) Canache 10 Oct; 1 ad Surf Bay 16 Oct and 2 ad there next day; 1 Bertha's Beach 29 Oct and 2 there 4 Nov (DO).

LEAST SEEDSNIPE *Thinocorus rumicivorus*

V

A female at Gipsy Cove on 1 Oct 1989 (AH). The 8th record for the islands, but quite likely much overlooked.

SOUTH POLAR SKUA *Catharacta maccormicki*

V

One on the sea off Cape Pembroke on 10 Mar 1990, later heading off north. Few records, but may be much overlooked.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Rare PM

An adult in non-breeding dress flew S past Cape Pembroke on 15 Nov 1990. Suspected on several other occasions at passage periods but this was my only confirmed sighting.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

V

One in non-breeding dress at Bertha's Beach on 4 Nov 1989 (DO). The second record for the islands. Common or Arctic Terns are recorded off Cape Pembroke at passage periods each year, generally distant.

ANTARCTIC TERN *Sterna vittata*

PM

An adult in breeding dress 21 Oct 1989 in Port William; 16 at Cape Pembroke 6 Nov (DM, DO) and 5 there 7 Dec 1989 (DO); 1 at Bertha's Beach 11 Dec and 4 there 27 Dec 1989 (DO); 1 ad in breeding dress at Surf Bay 4 Nov 1990; 20+ off Kidney Is. and a first-winter bird dead on the beach, 25 Nov 1990.

Strange (1992) lists this species as a vagrant, but these observations suggest a regular passage. The species was suspected on other occasions but only close-range birds were conclusively identified because of possible confusion with Common, Arctic and possibly the larger South American Tern *S. hirundinacea*.

[SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

V

An adult winter-plumage bird at Bertha's Beach on 28 Nov and again on 27 Dec 1989 (DO) was probably this species, not previously

recorded for the islands; but the possibility of its being a Cayenne Tern *S. (s.) eurygnatha* cannot be excluded.]

EARED DOVE *Zenaida auriculata*

V

One at Port Louis 2–12 Apr 1990 (MM). The dates fit nicely with passage periods.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Rare breeder

2 juv at Moody Brook barracks 3 May and 4 (2 ad, 2 juv) there 14 May 1989. One juv was the normal white-breasted form, the other was a rich golden-buff beneath, much less conspicuous in the gloom of the derelict barracks. Shane Wolsey confirmed breeding at a settlement in East Falkland (pers. comm.), so this was only the second breeding record. Doubtless the nearby rubbish tip was a good food source. The barracks was demolished in July 1990. One at Cape Pembroke late May 1989 (D. Munns). One at FIPASS 2 Aug 1990 (AH) may have been a fugitive from the wrecked barracks site.

FIRE-EYED DIUCON *Pyrope pyrope*

V

One at Hill Cove in Nov 1990 (per T. Blake) was at least the 7th for the islands.

RUFIOUS-BACKED NEGRITO *Lessonia rufa*

V

A male came aboard the *Falklands Right* off West Falkland, c. 30 nautical miles WSW of Cape Meredith, on 11 Oct 1988 (crew, pers. comm.). One on New Island in late Nov 1990 after prolonged westerly gales (T. Chater). The 2nd and 3rd records for the islands.

FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER *Tyrannus savana*

V

An adult at Gipsy Cove on 2–3 Apr 1989 (R. Bayliss) is the 4th record for the islands.

CHILEAN SWALLOW *Tachycineta leucopyga*

Scarce PM

1 juv Stanley House 4–6 Mar 1989; 3 Cape Pembroke 7 Mar 1990 (D. Munns, WRPB); 1 Frying Pan 1 Apr 1990; 2 John St., Stanley, 11 Mar 1990 and 5 there 26 Mar 1990 (AH); 2 at Brookfield farm April 90 (J. McPhee); 1 on Sea Lion Is. 23 Dec 1990. Evidently a regular passage visitor in small numbers. The juvenile in Stanley was clearly this species and not the very similar White-rumped Swallow *T. leucorrhoa*, which is also a potential vagrant.

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Scarce PM

A passage visitor in small numbers, more frequent in the austral spring. Records as follows: 1 in Stanley 13 Oct 1989; 1 juv Cape Pembroke 14 Oct 1989; 1 Stanley racecourse 31 Mar 1990; 1 in Stanley 5 Aug 1990 during a strong westerly gale (the first August record for the islands); 1 at Surf Bay 7 Oct 1990.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

V

Two at Government House in Stanley on 13 Oct 1988 (S. Wolsey and R. Bayliss pers. comm.) were the first records for the islands. One over Beaver Pond, Pebble Is., on 18 Dec 1988.

CLIFF SWALLOW *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

V

One along Cape Pembroke on 8 Dec 1989 (M. Whitehouse and G. Cripps); 2 at Stanley airport on 14–15 Nov 1990 were exhausted and had clearly only just arrived. The second and third records for the islands.

RUFIOUS-COLLARED SPARROW *Zonotrichia capensis* V, probably annual

A small number on Beaver Is. and New Is. in late May/early June 1990 (S. Poncet and T. Chater); 1 in tussock near the settlement, Carcass Is. 4 Sept, and 1 singing by the settlement 7 Sept 1990; 2 at NW Point, Carcass Is. 8 Sept 1990 and 1 there next day. At least 4 individuals involved in this small spring influx. The species seems to be turning up more often these days, particularly in the west.

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Notes on the Black-throated Antwren *Myrmeciza atrothorax* and Spot-breasted Antwren *M. stictothorax* in Brazil

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The Black-throated Antwren *Myrmeciza atrothorax* is a common South American formicariid, widely distributed from the Guianas, Venezuela and eastern Colombia south to northern Bolivia and Amazonian Brazil. According to our observations, this species inhabits the thick lower strata of humid forests, secondary growth scrub, and also the gallery forests of northern Mato Grosso, central Brazil. As mentioned by Hilty & Brown (1986), this antwren occasionally joins